Funeral of Fredrich Kunst

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A Funeral is an awkward time for most of us, difficult to know how to respond. Death is never a good thing, even if it brings relief to one struggling with infirmity and poor health. And so for the Christian, who believes that death is not the end, but who resounds to the words of St. Paul who writes, “**To Live is Christ, to die is gain**,” we are filled partly with sorrow and partly with joy. Part of us wants to cry for our loss, another part laugh for Fred’s gain.

Death is not tragic for anyone in Christ Jesus, and certainly not for Fred, for the, last few years, Fred has been the one who Jesus was talking about when he said, “**Come to me all who *LABOUR* and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**.”

These words are very ironic for Fred, come to me all who labour. Because he was a man who, would happily labour the whole day long. In his working days he was a carpenter…not just a run-of-the mill carpenter, but a perfectionist carpenter. One who wouldn’t just labour until the job was done, but stay till the job was done right…only then would he be able to rest.

It saddens me to say that I never knew THAT Fred. When I first met him three years ago, he was already quite feeble, unable to find joy in the LABOUR that gave him purpose. But there remained evidence that he was an active, hard working man, because he was so much like his wife, Adeline, a hard working woman. And isn’t it fitting, poetic even, that of all people who were called to carry the cross of severe weakness and disability for nigh on ten years, it was Fred; not only because he was a man of strong faith who could honour God in bearing it; but a man with a strong woman beside him. A woman who lives to LABOUR just as he did…Adeline who is most relaxed and at rest when she’s waiting on and serving others.

When Fred was able, He and Adeline would do everything together, even work together. And two peas in a pod naturally shared the same work ethic. She would clean the homes he built. Fred wasn’t satisfied until everything he built was square; Adeline isn’t satisfied until she’s fed you a square meal. Two peas in a pod, cut from the same cloth.

Fred was the type who found meaning in his work. And there’s no higher calling from God than to do your job, whatever it is, in love of God and service to your neighbor. Not just for a paycheck, but because we weren’t made to sit on our duff, and because shoddy work is wasteful. No, Fred understood that we were made for what St. Paul calls “fruitful labor.” That’s why these last years for Fred, a man who knew this truth, found his new disabilities so disheartening. Anyone would, but especially Fred.

St. Paul says, “**If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me**.” These words or the truth behind them is what must’ve stung Fred so deep. How can I do fruitful labour if I can barely walk? How can I work for the Lord or my neighbor, if I have to carry an oxygen tank around everywhere I go? How can I worship God in church if I can’t even drive myself or my wife there? Fred was rarely in physical pain, or if he was he didn’t admit it. But he suffered the *pain of helplessness*, something even the strongest of us would shudder to bear. Fred bore it for 9 years, altering his life 180 degrees and leaving him and all of us to wonder, what’s the point and purpose of this?

Suffering is never a good thing, but it seems so meaningless sometimes. If a soldier sleeps in the trenches with one eye open and a gunshot wound, he’s suffering but least it’s for a purpose. If a mother gets only two hours of sleep because she’s calming her restless baby, at least she knows she’s needed, and that her suffering is a sharing in the suffering of her baby.

But when a hard-working man can’t work anymore. When his body won’t and cooperate with his will and it never will again this side of eternity, where’s the meaning in that? When Opa can’t take his loved and loving grandkids fishing, when he can’t be the family handyman anymore, where’s the purpose in life? When he can no longer drive his wife to where she needs to go, what’s the use in living?

Apart from God, suffering is a meaningless psychological episode in a harsh and pointless universe. But dear friends and family of Fredrich Kunst, to the Christian, suffering is not pointless, and it’s certainly not useless. To one who was buried with Jesus Christ through baptism like Fred was…suffering is a calling, a job, a type of labour for the Lord that He might send our way for us to DO. A type of labour that Fred’s Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was all too familiar with himself. You see, God will never test us more than we can bear, and he will never let us suffer more than he’s already suffered for us.

And the purpose of that calling to suffer, the highest calling of the Christian, is found in the words of St. Paul who preaches so all can hear, “**With full courage now as always, Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or death.”**

How did Fred handle his suffering? He honoured Christ by clinging to him in faith till the end. Now, don’t get me wrong, in his suffering Fred certainly wasn’t saying to God, “Thank you sir, may I have another.” Neither did Christ, if you remember. And Jeremiah the prophet writes in his sufferings, “**My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord. My soul continually remembers my affliction, and it and is bowed down within me**.” Great men of God are often called to suffer, that’s par for the course, and it is a struggle. But their trust is not to their suffering, but to the Lord who delivers all who wait upon Him.

Fred honored Christ in his body, both when it was working and when it wasn’t. As a runner runs a marathon, people bring him water, serve him along the way because, all of his strength, his endurance, his purpose, is finishing the race that was laid out before him.

It might not have looked like it, but Fred--the active man who helped build the Lethbridge Lodge, the handyman who would bring his tools along whenever he’d visit family--has been actively running a race these past nine years. And it took all that he had to complete the track laid out before him. He received the much needed support from his family, and words can’t measure what that meant to him. But now, finally, mercifully, he has reached the finish line. Fred has won the race, he has kept the faith unto the last. And his Lord was with him the whole way, In Word and Spirit, in his Body and Blood--his Holy Communion. And he is with Fred today in paradise…two perfectionist carpenters who now from their suffering labours rest.